

Roberto Lopez

\*12-28-02

Hialeah, FL

Dear Members  
and Friends  
of Dade Heritage Trust

Have a fun  
holiday season!

May all of  
you and everyone  
at Dade Heritage  
Trust have a  
merry Christmas  
and a  
happy new year.

Sincerely,  
Roberto Lopez

You guys are  
doing a wonderful  
job in preserving  
the best of  
the past for  
the future  
of Miami's  
history and  
heritage.



*December 27, 2002*

*Dear Becky,*

*Would you be so kind as to pass on my heartfelt thank you to the board of Dade Heritage Trust for sending the beautiful basket of flowers that certainly help to brighten my recovery.*

*It was very thoughtful of the board to remember me during this difficult time. I am touched and appreciative.*

*I am home now and getting my strength back, but it will take some time. I have a good prognosis and will stick to my regime until all is clear.*

*Frans is helpful and supportive, so I have all I need now to recover.*

*In closing, let me wish each and everyone of you a healthy and happy new year.*

*Again, I thank you for the plants and flowers that still flourish in our home as a reminder of dear friends and Frans' colleagues.*

*Fondly,*



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Becky Roper Matkov

December 10, 2002

**DADE HERITAGE TRUST**

Ms. Vivian Donnell Rodriguez, Director  
Miami-Dade County Park and Rec Department  
275 NW 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Miami, FL 33128

Re: Calusa Park Playhouse, Key Biscayne

*Vivian*  
Dear Ms. Rodriguez,

The Dade Heritage Trust, our community's largest historic preservation organization, recently named the Calusa Park Playhouse located in Crandon Park to Miami-Dade County's "Ten Most Endangered Sites" for 2002-2003. By focusing the attention of the community and of the media on endangered sites, and by working cooperatively with individual property owners, other organizations and government officials, Dade Heritage Trust seeks to preserve these imperiled places.

The Calusa Playhouse, built in 1917, is considered a highly significant symbol of the heritage of Miami-Dade County. In 1990, the Calusa Playhouse became a historically designated site by the Miami-Dade County Historic Preservation Division. Its designation was made based on the building's age, original function as a bunkhouse for African-American workers of the Matheson Coconut Plantation and its association with the Matheson family, who donated large tracts of land to the County for parks, including Crandon Park.

Unfortunately, today the Calusa Park Playhouse, which is owned by Miami-Dade County Parks, is in a state of disrepair and abandonment. Its current condition is a direct result of an attempt by the Miami-Dade County Parks Department to repair and restore the building after a damaging fire. According to documentation provided by the Miami-Dade County Historic Preservation Division, department employees removed 2/3 of the historic building's siding and roof but did not follow up with the repairs and restoration. In fact, the construction attempt left the building "grossly damaged," according to the Historic Preservation Division.

Exposed portions of the building interior were not covered by tarps to prevent further damage from exposure. The building has further deteriorated since a 1997 demand for immediate corrective action was made by the Historic Preservation Division to Frank Faragalli, Executive Assistant to the Director of the Miami-Dade Parks Department. (Please see attached memo.)

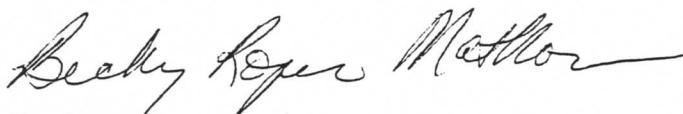
The Dade Heritage Trust is requesting that your department take immediate action to first protect the building from further deterioration. We are also requesting that a plan be developed that would lead to the future restoration of the Calusa Park Playhouse. We understand that insurance proceeds of \$48,951 were available to complete the repairs, which were matched by a state preservation grant of \$30,000, approved Nov. 18, 1996, and an additional \$20,000 which were to become available February 27, 1996. Donations from individuals raised by the Key Biscayne Music and Drama Club may also have been given to the Miami-Dade County Parks Department for restoration and repairs of the Calusa Playhouse.

Dade Heritage Trust would be very interested in assisting your office in the restoration and reuse plans for the Calusa Park Playhouse. Future uses could include the establishment of a visitor's information center focusing on the history of Key Biscayne and Crandon Park, where historical photographs and artifacts could be displayed.

We would be very pleased to meet with you in the near future to discuss the future of the Calusa Park Playhouse. Please contact me at (305) 358-9572 at your convenience to schedule a time when we may meet.

I look forward to hearing from you soon,

Sincerely,



Becky Matkov  
Executive Director

cc: Ivan Rodriguez, Director  
Division of Historic Resources



1/14/03

METROPOLITAN DADE COUNTY PARK & RECREATION DEPARTMENT • 275 NW 2<sup>ND</sup> STREET • MIAMI, FLORIDA 33128-1748

FAX

TO: Becky Matkov  
FROM: VIVIAN DONNELL RODRIGUEZ  
SUBJ: CALUSA PLAYHOUSE

Per your request, info.  
on Calusa from staff.  
Thank you for your  
offer -  
Call me if you have any  
questions 755-7903

fax 358-1162

(4 pages)

## Memorandum

**To:** Vivian Donnell Rodriguez, Director  
Park and Recreation Department

**Date:** January 14, 2003

**From:** Frank Faragalli, Assistant to the Director  
Park and Recreation Department

**Subject:** Status Report on Calusa  
Playhouse

*FFaragalli*

The following is a status report on what is referred to as the Calusa Playhouse presently located in the Mangrove Trail (formally "Calusa Park") area of Crandon Parks. Included is a brief history of how the building came to be sited on Park property.

### Historical Background

The structure was originally built circa 1917 and received historic designation through the Miami-Dade Historic Preservation Board on July 18, 1990. The designation was granted based on the building being one of only two remaining structures from Key Biscayne's early plantation era, and its association with the Matheson Family, which was instrumental in the development of Key Biscayne. The designation has a Special Standard for Certificate of Appropriateness that allows future location of the structure to accommodate its reuse with other Matheson-related buildings, since its present relocation is not historically significant.

The original location of the structure was on the Sheraton Royal Biscayne Property in what is now the Village of Key Biscayne. It was originally used as a "bunkhouse" for workers on the plantation. Later it was converted to an Episcopal church, and in 1966 the Key Biscayne Music and Drama Club (KBMDC) was given the structure to use as a small community theatre. Because of the development of the Sheraton, the Club moved the structure to its present location, hence the name "Calusa Playhouse". The structure was given to Dade County in 1970 with the understanding that the Drama Club would continue to use and control the Playhouse. No formal agreement for the use of the structure was executed until 1997.

In 1995 the structure was damaged by fire, with approximately one-third of the building being destroyed. The KBMDC received two State Historical Resources Grants-in aid in the total amount of \$48,067 and a matching amount of \$48,951 from the County insurance proceeds to restore and upgrade the structure. The KBMDC asked the Department to assume management of the project only to the point where the restoration would make the building whole, but not usable. The available funding was not enough to complete all building code required upgrades to receive a Certificate of Occupancy. The KBMDC assumed but never

fulfilled the responsibility for raising the funds necessary to make the structure usable again as public space. The Historic Preservation Division granted a Certificate of Appropriateness for partial restoration in August 1997. In October 1997 the Historic Preservation Division informed the Department that the work done overstepped the intent of the COA. The department agreed on several steps to work toward a solution. The first requirement was to address the lead paint hazard in and on the structure. Completing this requirement ended-up bankrupting the project from any further work. Over the course of FY's 97-99, the Department invested an additional \$229,000 to clean and weatherize the site and the building of all lead contamination. Nothing further has been done with the structure since July 1999.

### Recent Events

In 2000, a consultant was engaged to develop restoration drawings, but before that happened the need to relocate the structure because of the requirements of the Crandon Park Master Plan became a primary issue. The Crandon Park Master Plan (CPMP) approved in 1996, required that the structure be relocated to another part of Key Biscayne where it could continue to be used by the KBMDC, or it could be relocated to another part of Crandon Park where it would no longer be used as a theatre.

The present day viability or resources of the KBMDC are unknown, so the only apparent option available is to relocate the structure within the Park. The Department has explored several options for moving the building with input from the Historic Preservation Division. There options included:

1. Move the building as is and hope that it survives intact
2. Stabilize the structure in place by finishing the exterior restoration and then moving the building to the new location;
3. Dismantle the building and re-build in the new location;
4. Demolish the building and build an exact replica using as much salvaged original material as possible

All options involve various levels of resources yet to be determined. The relocation itself is only one issue and we have identified a viable site within Crandon Park. The resources for the completion of the structure and compliance of building code issues once moved are undetermined at this time.

For the immediate future the Department can again weatherize the existing structure while we explore possibilities with the Dade Heritage Trust. This is only a short-term solution, as funds would need to be identified for a restoration or historic reconstruction of the structure.

190 SE 12<sup>th</sup> Terrace, Miami, FL 33131

## Dade Heritage Trust

Miami Dade Parks

January 7, 2003

FAX (305) 755-7946

To: Vivian Donnell Rodriguez

Dear Vivian,

We haven't heard back yet on the status of the Calusa Park Playhouse (see attached December 10, 2002 letter). We'd like to report back to our Board in time for the Jan. 15, 2003 meeting. Please feel free to call me so we can discuss Miami-Dade County's plans and how Dade Heritage Trust may assist in securing and restoring this important historic landmark.

Look forward to speaking with you soon.

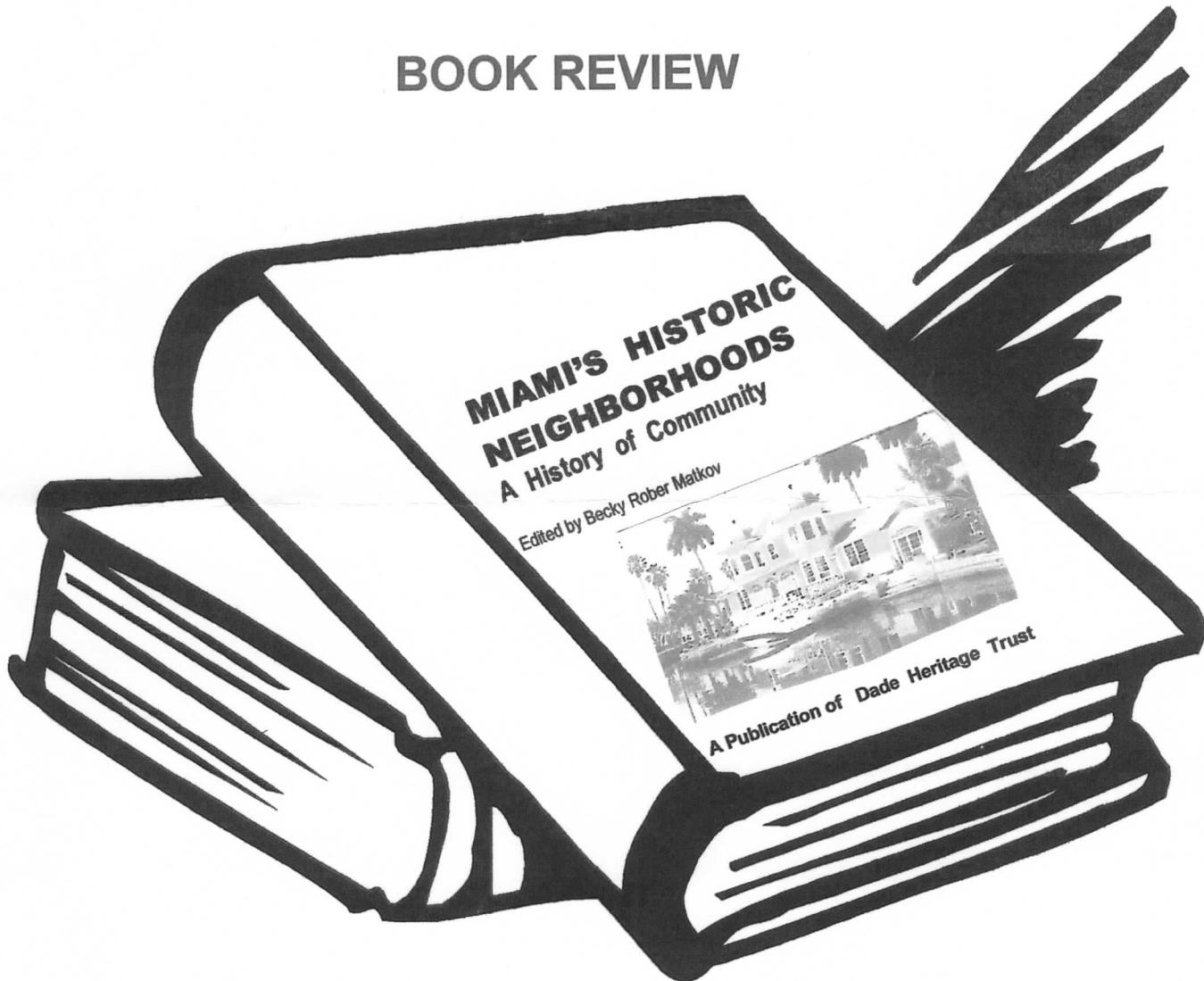
Sincerely,

*Becky Roper Markov*

Becky Roper Markov  
Executive Director

[Click here and type slogan]

## BOOK REVIEW



REVIEWED BY

BECKY ROPER MATKOV, Executive Director, DHT

Biscayne Chapter NSDAR  
**Annual Book Review and Luncheon**  
Saturday, February 15th 11:30 am  
The Surf Club - 9011 Collins Avenue

**For Reservations: Cost \$25.00 per person**

Please send check made payable to Biscayne Chapter NSDAR,  
To: Violet Storer, Treasurer, 9133 Collins Ave., Surfside, FL 33154-3118  
Phone 305-864-2673 (Violet Storer) or 305-861-7604 (Donna Cullen for questions)



## ***Preservation Today***

Spring Edition 2003

### **About the Publication**

#### ***About Dade Heritage Trust***

Dade Heritage Trust is the leading voice for historic preservation in Miami-Dade County. Founded as a non-profit membership organization in 1972, DHT works to preserve the architectural, cultural and environmental heritage of our community through education, advocacy and restoration. Whether restoring the Cape Florida Lighthouse or producing the annual two-month long celebration, Dade Heritage Days, DHT works to build bridges across cultural barriers to unite people in an appreciation of the unique history of Miami.

#### ***Preservation Today Magazine***

*Preservation Today* magazine is a handsome publication produced annually by Dade Heritage Trust to educate and inform those interested in preserving historic treasures of Miami-Dade County. The theme of this issue will be *Golden Wings: Miami's Aviation Heritage*. Articles will highlight Miami's connection to world famous aviators such as Glenn Curtiss, Amelia Earhart and Eddie Rickenbacker. Miami's rich history includes Chapman Field, the PanAm Terminal at Dinner Key, Chalks Airline, Opa Locka Airport, Richmond Field, Cuban Freedom Flights, and today's Miami International Airport, now celebrating its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The magazine is filled with beautiful photography, news of community leaders and DHT restoration projects, articles that highlight Miami's "preservation pioneers," exciting cultural attractions, and a diverse group of advertisers.

#### ***Why You Should Advertise***

*Preservation Today* magazine is saved as a reference for many years. In addition to its long shelf life, it has multiple readers per issue and is utilized as an educational resource. Moreover, it is read by business leaders and community stakeholders alike who greatly believe in the importance of preserving Miami's history.

The magazine is a glossy 8.5 x 11 inches, black and white, with full color on the cover and special pages. Approximately 5,000 magazines will be printed and distributed to DHT members, sponsors, and community leaders, including political office holders, chambers of commerce, convention and conference planners, visitor centers, hotels, and cultural organizations. *Preservation Today* is a great advertising vehicle for real estate companies, restaurants, hotels and inns, architectural firms, interior design services, antique stores and many more. This issue is especially appropriate for airline-oriented businesses and organizations to tell their story. Whatever your forte, DHT invites you to place your ad in very good company.

**For more information and special advertising incentives,  
please call Dade Heritage Trust at 305-358-9572.**



## PRESERVATION TODAY MAGAZINE

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Please contact **Dade Heritage Trust, 305-358-9572** for questions or assistance.